



Broad Support for Performance Evaluations

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, March 07, 2011

After much discussion at the City Council meeting last week the Council voted in favor of having city staff study performance as a criteria when it comes to employee layoffs.

The review will determine if the City should include job performance when considering layoffs, or keep the current system in place, which is based solely on seniority. Due to budget shortfalls, the City has eliminated "vacant positions," which were budgeted with the intention of hiring someone to fill them. Elimination of those positions generated savings, since the savings came from no longer budgeting for the positions.

As a result, the City is forced to do layoffs, based on seniority only. For example, you may have someone on the job for nine years who is under performing yet someone who has been on the job for six years and is a great worker. The person who has been with the City for nine years will "bump" the better performing employee, in the same or different department.

In some situations the person going into the new position does not have the skill set to do the job. This causes disruption to that department and disruption to the client (residents, business, etc). For example someone who has never stepped foot in the water pollution control plant now has a job at the plant, which requires a special skill. Skill sets and domain expertise are lost when people bump to other departments based only on seniority.

There are two points which I think get overlooked in this debate. One: My proposal does not eliminate seniority as a measurement but instead adds performance as a factor. Whether performance will be 10 percent or 20 percent of the total criteria remains to be seen. We may eventually also decide to include education and certification as well. We need some way other than months on the job to make a informed decision.

The other item being overlooked is that performance should be considered when getting a raise or a promotion—not just the current situation of layoffs. Today, salary step increases are rewarded only based on seniority. Adding performance as a criteria should also be considered.

In addition, city staff will study the current evaluation process, which has not always been followed. Some say that evaluations do not matter since the current system is only based on seniority. I would personally be interested in a affordable software evaluation solution so that HR can track all evaluations

in real time, and that there is a standard format with the option of allowing some customization of questions for specialty jobs.

I am surprised that this issue was not resolved in prior decades and that there is strong opposition from the leadership of public employee unions. Several city employees in different departments have mentioned to me that it is disappointing to work with someone who does not carry their weight. This is about civil service rules and not about unions, however there will be a lengthy meet-and-confer discussion with the 11 unions. In comparison, the numerous building trade unions do not have seniority and bumping. Union trade members are hired and fired based on work performance.

Seniority is being raised also in Los Angeles, where the ACLU has won in court against the school district, by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, a former teachers union organizer. "We cannot continue to automatically guarantee lifetime employment to all teachers," Mayor Villaraigosa said, "nor can we make decisions about assignments, transfers and layoffs solely on the basis of seniority. Tenure and seniority must be reformed or we will be left with only one option: eliminating it entirely." If a former union organizer and now Democratic Mayor of California's biggest city can support performance evaluations, plus 79 percent of San Jose residents, so to should the San Jose City Council.

Congratulations to Arizona-based Microchip Inc, a veteran semiconductor company. They recently located their Silicon Valley office to San Jose from Sunnyvale filling up 100,000 square feet in North San Jose.

Saturday, the Willow Glen Rams defeated the Burlingame Panthers for the division two boys varsity soccer championship. It was first championship soccer win for Willow Glen. Congratulations to Julio Morales who scored two of the three goals.

Ten seats remain unclaimed for tonight's 6:30pm showing of "The Olmstead Legacy" at City Hall. Please email me to hold a seat(s) at Pierluigi.Oliverio@SanJoseCA.gov

<http://www.theolmstedlegacy.com/>

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